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MAMMY'S

CHRISTMAS STORY

DUBLIN MOFFAT & COMPANY, PUBLISHERS LONDON: SIMPKIN & CO. 1868

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Introduction.

''Tis Christmas Eve, we have twined a wreath,
To hang in the hall to-morrow;
Bright holly berries, their dark leaves beneath,
Shine forth like love 'midst sorrow.

And mistletoe branches, with ivy sprays,
All lay their heads together,
Whilst ling'ring roses their pale cheeks raise
Sweet dreams of summer weather.'

OW, Mammy, here we are all gathered round the fire; we have given the logs a fresh poke, settled the arm-chair comfortably for you, and only want you to be seated in it, and then for the story!'

'Yes! yes! Mammy, now for the story,' echoed six little voices; 'won't you begin?'

'Certainly, darlings' But' thought you all wished to see Norah mix the Christmas pudding first; if so, you must follow me to the store-room.'

'Oh! yes, we forgot,' and up sprang a group of happy, healthy brothers, sisters, and cousins, all met at an old family mansion to spend their holidays.

Jumping round Mammy, which was their pet name for their mother, and by which endearing term she was addressed by her little nephews and nieces also, they sprang into the store-room, and surrounding Norah, the cook, stood demolishing, with their eyes, the dishes full of currants, raisins, preserved fruits, and other good things, which were expected to turn into a huge, rich pudding on the morrow.

'Won't it be a fine one?' said little Nelly.

'I should rather say so,' replied Jack, the eldest boy of the family, who constituted himself an undeniable authority upon every subject started by the 'youngsters,' as he called the little ones.

'Isn't your arm tired, Norah, you have been so long stirring that great pan full of batter?' said Henry; 'let me give it a twist for you now, and see if I don't make it whirl round."

'Don't try it, my boy,' said Jack, advisingly, 'or maybe your arm won't ache all night.'

And so for a short time longer the merry group watched the mysterious process, and wonderingly admired Norah's dexterity in the culinary art, much as if *she* were some high-priestess, and *they* her votaries.

· But ere long they were satisfied, and begged dear Mammy to return to the parlour, and fulfil her promised treat of the story. Passing through the hall they drew her attention to a large wreath hung from the ceiling, upon the formation of which they had spent the afternoon of that day: and of which they were justly proud, for it was very tastefully put together—one long spray of mistletoe depending most knowingly from the top, which Jack said was 'the kissing branch,' and beneath which he vowed he would give a hearty salutation to Amy Gray, the rector's daughter, upon her arrival to dinner the next day.

Mammy having duly admired their pretty design, proceeded to the snug little parlour where, when alone, they took tea, and having arranged her young audience comfortably around her, turning up the lamp, and throwing a fine yule log upon the fire, began her story thus—first telling the children that it possessed a charm she knew would add to its interest—it was true. The name she had given it she added was—

LONG LOST INA.





MAMMY'S CHRISTMAS STORY.

CHAPTER I.

HE vicissitudes of life brought to a large seaport town in the south of Ireland Mrs. Chambré and her little daughter, Lilly, who was just ten years old. Mrs. Chambré's husband was of French extraction, but the family had settled in England a century back, and, therefore, retained but their name to recall their fatherland or parentage. Lilly was the only child of her widowed mother, and loved with the love ever bestowed upon an only child by the

mother, to whom she was the dearest thing on earth. She was a fair, bright creature, with long, waving, golden hair, and dark blue eyes, whose depth seemed at times unfathomable, as she fixed her earnest gaze upon one, and seemed reading your very soul. Mother and child were scarcely ever seen apart, for Lilly returned her only parent's devoted affection with all the fervour of her warm, young heart. Mrs. Chambre's means were very limited, therefore, on arriving at the city where she purposed staying for a few years, she sought for lodgings in a retired and remote street, where things were to be had at a moderate cost, and where, for a small yearly sum, she engaged two rooms in a respectable house, belonging to a tradesman and

his wife. They had not been many days settled in their new abode, when one evening, as Mrs. Chambré and Lilly were going up stairs to their apartments, they met in a lobby a little girl, who, with a bucket by her side, was scrubbing the boards near their sitting-room.

She curtseyed as they passed up, and when Lilly turned round to look at the stranger, she saw the little girl gazing after them with a wistful face, in which was mingled curiosity and shyness.

'Oh! Mamma, did you see that little girl just now on the lobby?' said Lilly, as they got into their bed-room and had shut the door; 'she never came upstairs since we arrived here until now, but she looks as if she belonged to the house; I

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wonder if she is a servant to Mrs. Newsome; she is too poor and shabby to be a child of her own, and besides, I think she told you she had no children.'

'No, darling; Mrs. Newsome said she had had a little girl who died when she was three years old.'

No more was said upon this occasion about the little girl, but the following day, when Lilly and Mrs. Chambré were going out to church (for it was Sunday) they saw the child sitting at the top of the kitchenstairs, all alone, looking over some little book, from which she raised her eyes as they passed through the hall, and a faint smile of recognition passed over her pale face when she saw Lilly looking at her.

Lilly seemed inclined to go over and

speak, but as it was nearly church-time Mrs. Chambré did not stop, merely saying, 'Good morning, dear;' so Lilly followed her mother silently, giving her new acquaintance a friendly nod before passing out of the street door.

'Mamma,' said Lilly, 'I wonder if that little girl goes to church or Sunday-school. Is she not pretty and gentle looking? Would you allow me to speak to her when we come home?'

'Well, darling, I have no objection to your speaking to her, but I do not say I could permit you to be intimate, or to make a companion of her, as you know, Lilly, we must be careful with whom we associate, having so few acquaintances in this city, that we are almost strangers

in the place. We must remember, also, dear child, that when God instituted different ranks and grades in society, He meant us to keep ourselves in the station it was His will we were born in.'

'Oh! Mother,' hastily interrupted Lilly, 'I don't want to make companions of common or ignorant children; but you know I have no little girl my own age to speak to, or play with, and that little girl looks like a lady, only for her clothes; indeed, she is as nice as myself, I'm certain.'

'Well, Lilly, I shall make no promise at present, but if, on inquiry, I find she would be a safe play-fellow for you, and that she is quiet and truthful, I may ask her up to our room now and then.'

'Oh, thanks, Mother,' said Lilly. And here the conversation came to an end, as they had reached the church door, which was not far from their lodgings.

Mrs. Chambré had been some years a widow. Her husband was a navy officer, and had died abroad of yellow fever, just as he was about getting a good shore appointment, which would have enabled him to settle down comfortably with his wife and child.

This news reached them just as the loving wife was anxiously awaiting her husband's return home, so it fell with double violence upon her heart. At first she was paralyzed from the blow, but after some little time, submission was granted her, and she felt that she must exert herself for the sake of the little one who was given to her entire care.

Lilly was the greatest earthly blessing left to poor Mrs. Chambré; and, young though she was when her dear father died, she used to try, in her own little way, to solace her mother, and lighten her sadness.

One morning, when Mrs. Chambré had been a long time awake, believing Lilly to be asleep by her side, the little one, turning round and throwing her arms about her mother, said, 'Mamma, why are you always sighing now?'

'Was I sighing, Lilly, darling?—I was unconscious of doing so; but were you not asleep, dear child?'

'Oh, no, Mamma, I have been awake this long time, but I did not wish to disturb you.'

A silence followed, and then Lilly said, 'Have you any friends in the world now, Mamma?'

'Why do you ask me this, Lilly?'

'Oh, Mamma, because you are not the same as you used to be. You are often crying all alone, and you look so different to what you did when——' she stopped, and flinging her arms again round her mother's neck, sobbed for a long while.

When she became calm, Mrs. Chambré said, 'Thank God, my precious child, I have friends left to me still on earth, and we both have the best Friend to love us in heaven, the One who has promised to be "the Father of the fatherless, and the God of the widow;" and I have you, too, my beloved child, to be grateful for; and I

trust, with the Lord's help, to train you for His service. Will you love and obey me, Lilly, and try to solace me now, when I have not dearest papa to be with me, or love me any more?'

Sinking her little head upon the pillow—for, child though she was, her bright intelligence took in all that had passed—Lilly answered slowly, and half in a whisper, 'I will try, Mamma; and if I were a man I would work for you too, and give you everything nice I could think of to make you happy.'

And these promises did the sweet child daily try to fulfil; year by year becoming more the joy and solace of that mother, who felt her to be a God-gift direct from heaven.

But we must now return to the Sunday

we had come to in the chapter preceding this, when we left Lilly and Mrs. Chambré at the church door. On returning home, they saw neither Mrs. Newsome or the little girl for the rest of the day. Mrs. Newsome and her husband took the Sunday afternoons for a holiday, and went out until about ten o'clock at night, leaving the house to the care of an old charwoman, who through the week did the rough jobs in the kitchen, and went of errands for her mistress and the lodgers.

Nancy was her name, and she was a specimen type of those of her class in Ireland, or rather of the best of them, for she had seen better days, and was for many years nurse in a family who, she used to say, belonged to the 'rale ould

stock,' where she was respected and thrated like a lady. But hard times came, and the 'ould stock' left the country, having sold their estate to a Scotch gentleman, who had no need of poor, old Nancy's services. Her mistress would have taken 'Mammy Nancy,' as she was called in the family, to England with them, but she clung to her own country, preferring poverty there to the thought of being buried anywhere but in the old churchyard where lay the bones of her husband, children, and people.

When Mrs. Newsome was out, old Nancy fumbled up and down stairs at the calls of the lodgers, for there were several in the house, which was a large one; and though she was slow, and unequal for much

work, she was civil, and genuine in her endeavour to do her best, and she was cleanly and tidy in her ways, so that Mrs. Chambré would have greatly preferred to be attended altogether by old Nancy had Mrs. Newsome permitted it; but this she would not do, wishing to enter the lodgers' rooms herself-often very officiously-and stand gossiping and making inspection tours with her eyes, to see what their occupation was, curiosity being her besetting sin. On Sundays, however, Nancy flourished about the house to her heart's content. She had taken at once to Mrs. Chambré, who, she said, was 'no upstart, with upsetting ways, but something like her dear old misthress, a born lady, willing to save an old crature throuble-for rale ladies will

do anything, and are never afraid of themselves.'

So Nancy loved to wait on the widow and her child, and her motherly old heart was drawn to the fatherless Lilly with genuine kindness and admiration.

Like all her class, Nancy loved a gossip, Mrs. Newsome being her favourite theme; so whenever she had an opportunity, she waited with Mrs. Chambré for an unsolicited chat.

On this Sunday evening of which we have spoken before, Nancy, having come up with a box of coals, lingered so long that Mrs. Chambré thought it but civil to say something, so she raised her head from the book she was reading, and remarked—'I suppose Mrs. Newsome has gone out.'

"Deed an' she has, Ma'am, an' 'tis a pourin' wet night for her: she'll spile more than she'll save in the tay, I'm thinking; for she has her illigent new cloth cloak on, that she grudges to the light of day; but you see, Ma'am, she gave it an air of the gas-lights to-night.'

'Well, Nancy, 'tis to be hoped the weather will improve for poor Mrs. Newsome's sake.'

'Poor, is it you call her?—sure enough, she's poor and mane about the heart, picking up the crumbs off the very floor, and reckoning the very potato skins;—hasn't she the unfortunate mice themselves upon crutches, from starvation?'

Mrs. Chambré could not suppress a smile at this last sally of Nancy's; but she turned the subject by saying—'Who is the little girl I see about the house?—she seems a respectable child.'

'Is it little Ina you mane, Ma'am?'

'I don't know her name, Nancy; but I have seen but one little girl in this house since I came to it.'

'Then it must be Miss Ina, and a sweet child she is, and a raal lady, no doubt, though her dress is against her; but sure that same isn't her fault, poor lamb, but them that's over her.'

Lilly had risen from her chair, and stood staring into old Nancy's face during the latter part of this dialogue, for her curiosity and interest had been excited all day about the vision of a probable playfellow, and she now ran over to her mamma, and burst forth, saying—'You see, Mamma, she is a

good child, and a lady, too; and now may I speak to and play with her often?'

'Why, then, you may do worse, Miss Lilly, added Nancy, and 'twould be a charity and a blessing to notice that poor crushed little crature, that gets the worst of food, and more kicks than halfpence, God help her, and no one to say the soft word to her but that poor, doting, old grandfather, that's a'most a child himself.'

Here a noise of somebody coming bustling up the stairs fell on their ears, and with a short, sharp tap at the door, Mrs. Newsome burst in, dripping with rain, and not in a mild temper, as she said loudly, and without any apology to Mrs. Chambré for this intrusion—'Come down stairs at once, Nancy; what way is this to treat me?—the kitchen-fire nearly out—no water boiled, and Ina gone to sleep upon the kitchen table. I promise you 'tis the last Sunday evening I shall leave you in care of 'my house!'

The old woman hobbled away as fast as she could, and Mrs. Newsome was about to beat a hasty retreat also, when she seemed to recollect her manners a little; so, reentering Mrs. Chambré's apartment, she said, in an apologetic tone of voice—

'Indeed, Ma'am, you'll kindly excuse me, but I am almost drowned, for I went to take a cup of tea with a friend, but after crossing the town, she had gone out, so I had to come home wet, cold, and hungry; therefore, I must hasten off my clothes, and take a glass of something hot, for I couldn't

fashion to have tea and bread and butter as chilly as I am at present.'

'I hope you will not take cold, Mrs. Newsome,' replied Mrs. Chambré, in her usual kind and gentle manner: 'you had better take off your cloak without delay.'

'Upon the door being closed Lilly threw her arms round her mamma's neck, and again urged her suit about Ina so warmly, that Mrs. Chambré consented the little girl should be asked up to their room after Lilly's lesson hours the next day.

Only that it was Sunday night Lilly would have danced about the room for the rest of the evening: as it was, she was so excited and elated, she could scarcely compose her mind to read even her favourite volume of *The Fairchild Family*,

which she had never been known to tire of before.

I daresay she dreamt of her expected playfellow all night; at any rate, this was her first thought on awaking the next morning.

It happened that some friends came to visit her mamma that day. Lilly thought they never would go, but at length they took their leave; and then Mrs. Chambré, having obtained a reluctant permission from Mrs. Newsome—who, for some strong private reason, seemed greatly to dislike the children coming in contact—Ina shyly stood at the door; and when desired by Mrs. Chambré to advance, did so slowly, and with furtive glances around; still, with a native grace, which did not pass unnoticed by that lady, as she put out her hand in

an encouraging manner, and said some reassuring words to her new protegé.

Lilly was, of course, demonstrative in her reception of Ina, who, although she seemed strange with the elder occupant of the room, was more frank in her manner with the younger; for children are free from the constraints and conventionalities of life, known only to their elders, and seldom seem to feel any difference of rank, either above or below them, in their associates.

- 'What is your name, dear?' said Lilly's mamma.
- 'How old are you?' quickly added Lilly herself.
- 'My name is Ina Forrester, Ma'am, and I shall soon be ten years old.'
 - 'Just my age—how nice!' said Lilly.

- 'Have you any parents, dear?' Mrs. Chambré said.
- 'No, Ma'am,' replied Ina, looking very sorrowful.
- 'Nancy said she had a grandfather, you know, Mother,' hinted Lilly, in a low voice.

But her mamma took no notice of this remark, merely saying: 'Now, children, go to the far-off window, and make no noise, as I have letters to write.'

Ten minutes saw them as intimate as in they had been old friends—Lilly having displayed her dolls, books, and all sorts of treasures to Ina's delighted gaze.

Mrs. Newsome had evidently dressed Ina in her best for this grand occasion, but this holiday toilette was poor enough, con-

sisting of a faded brown linsey frock, with a patched diaper bib, which had seen better days, for the stuff composing it was fine, but it had become far too small for its The shoes she wore were never made for her, being much too large; though stuffed at the toes to keep them on her For none of these things did Lilly care: she only felt the joy of having a kindred spirit with her, and she only saw the bright eyes of rich brown answering her own glances, the dark, wavy hair, and gentle smile of her new friend, who had a most sweet accent when she spoke. They had played together about an hour, Mrs. Chambré meantime having been occupied with her writing, when old Nancy entered the room, saving'Come down, Miss Ina, acushla; herself wants you.'

A cloud shadowed the poor child's face at these words, but she got up from the recess in which she had been sitting on a low stool, saying—'Yes, Nancy, I'm ready.' A look of fear came across her brow at the same time, but she did not forget to turn round at the door, and, with a curtsey to Mrs. Chambré, say, 'Thank you, Ma'am.'

Nancy, as usual, lingered, and addressing herself to the sideboard, upon which she was placing a jug of water, she said: 'The wasp of the world, couldn't she lave the crature enjoy even one hour without sticking her sting into it! 'Tis hard for the child to believe what I often say to thry and comfort her—that God is good, and has an



angel on purpose to take care of her, and that He will bring her out of her throubles, if she asks Him.'

'What's the matter with Ina?' said Lilly, looking inquisitively into Nancy's face.

'Matther, is it, darlin'?—well, I think everything is the matther with her, poor dear. First, she's an orphant; next, she's poor; then she has a nagur over her who often laves her cowld and hungry, and is making a slave of a being that hasn't the strength to do all her hard work. Up late an' early, claning boots and shoes for the lodgers, not to mention knives and forks, scrubbing floors, and drawin' wather, but that I stopped this time past, for I got Billy, the boy that lives at the corner, to go to the pump for threepence a week, which I

have saved out of the thrifle the lodgers allow me for snuff. But *she* doesn't know this yet, or she'd take the money out of me one way or other, and hardship the child as usual.'

'Poor little girl,' said Mrs. Chambré; 'but why does she stay here?'

'Where else would she go, Ma'am, without a friend she knows in this place, and the
misthress, with the hould she has on her,
and the ould man below, who she's paid
to keep—and gets more money for doin'
that same than she'd let any body know—
how could the child lave her?'

'Nancy, where are you?' broke in the sharp voice of their landlady; 'chattering where you're not wanted, as usual. Hurry down, I say.'

With a queer face, and shake of the head,

the old charwoman obeyed this summons as fast as her crab-like gait permitted.

'Poor Ina,' said Lilly, sitting on the hearthrug, and gazing mournfully into the fire. 'What can we do for her?—aren't you sorry, Mother?'

'Yes, love; but we must inquire more about her before we could settle how to help her. I shall seek an opportunity of learning some of her history from Mrs. Newsome.'

'The nasty, unkind woman,' said Lilly; 'I never liked her, but now I hate her.'

'Hate her? Lilly, is this right to say of any one? You know we must not indulge those strong feelings; for we are told to love even our enemies; and you know, also, dear child, Mrs. Newsome has never offended you in any way.'

- 'But didn't you hear what Nancy said, how cruel she is to Ina, Mamma?'
- 'Nancy is strong in her feelings and words, love; but we must have a little patience, and judge for ourselves.'

Lilly remained silent for a long time, gazing at the fire, and then she said—'I can only do one thing for her. When you pray for orphans to-night, I will just pray for "Ina," and perhaps God may hear me, as I am one myself.'

'Be sure He will, Lilly; but, remember, poor Ina is more than fatherless, for she has no mother.'

'Oh! Mamma, I forgot;' and Lilly's arms were twined round her mother's neck, while she sobbed out—'Poor Ina!'

CHAPTER II.

'Life is but a scene of labour— Every one's his task assigned— We must each assist our neighbour When we see him faint behind.'

OT long after Ina's first visit to Lilly, Mrs. Chambré introduced the subject of Mrs. Newsome's little 'help' to that sturdy lady, and obtained from her all the information she was disposed to give concerning the child. The pith of the conversation was as follows:—

Four years previously to the opening of our story, a gentleman had placed this child and an old man, who was her grandfather,

as lodgers with Mrs. Newsome, who was also to board them, and purchase any needful clothing; the expenses of which this gentleman was to defray by quarterly payments; and he promised these should be handed her in advance every three months. This promise he had adhered to, until the last year, when the supplies had come in slowly, and but half the promised amount forwarded to their landlady, who added - 'her house being no charitable asylum, she could not keep them much longer if this went on, but should send them to the workhouse—as the young one was unable to earn her bread, and the old man paralyzed and helpless.' However, she said that Ina must do her best to share the house-work with old Nancy, as that

was the only way she could repay herself for feeding and clothing the girl. 'The gentleman,' she continued, 'said he was a relation, and but poorly off himself; but that he did his best for them from charitable motives. He desired Ina to be sent to the parish school, but strictly forbade her making any acquaintances, either outside or in the house.' This accounted for Mrs. Newsome's dislike to allow her to play with Lilly. The landlady said she was a good child on the whole; though if the old man had his way, he would have her spoiled long ago. But for some time before he had come to live with her, she said his mind had become weak, and at times now he was quite childish, and often unable to leave his bed.

Before she left the room, however, the obsequious and cringing Mrs. Newsome gave her lodger a promise that Ina may come up to Mrs. Chambré's room whenever she was asked, and could be spared; for she could assume many forms and faces tooone minute being all servility to her lodgers; the next, a very tyrant to her dependants. Mr. Newsome was seldom seen; going out to his place of business in the morning, he did not return home until late at night; so he never seemed to interfere with his wife's household arrangements. Nancy often spoke of him with liking and respect, saying he was 'a most willin' poor man, hard-working and soft-hearted, but he let herself be master and mistress-more was the pity.'

Ere long, Ina and Lilly became close



Mrs. Chambré saw so much to friends. like in the little stranger, that for several reasons she encouraged her to visit them when permitted to do so. She found so sweet a disposition, and such natural refinement in the orphan child, that she no. longer feared an intimacy with her own dear one; besides, she felt she may do good in more ways than one to poor, friendless Ina, who in her turn gave the most grateful love to her benefactress and Lilly. One quality was strongly developed in the latter, and that was total forgetfulness of self; so that she was known by the few friends they possessed, as 'the unselfish little girl;' and very soon an equally pleasing attribute showed itself to her new acquaintances in Ina-patience. She seldom murmured or

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made any complaint - though they well knew how slaved she was by Mrs. Newsome. Still Mrs. Chambré saw she should not interfere with her landlady in this matter, so all she could do was to ask leave to have Ina with her whenever it was practicable. One day, when Lilly had begged for Ina's company for an hour or so, the child said to them: 'Oh! I had such a curious dream last night. I thought I was in a bright, hot country, with a lady I called Mamma; that we were dressed beautifully, and had darkfaced people all about us, and that I was afraid they would take me from the lady, who had me in her arms; and then, when I awoke, I thought it was no dream at all, but that I knew it all before; for at times the very same place comes to my recollection, and the sweet face of the lady, who I think I must have really seen when I was a little child.

'Perhaps it was your own mamma, love, you dreamt of,' replied Mrs. Chambré. 'Do you know where you were born, or how long your parents are dead?'

'No, Ma'am, indeed, I don't; poor grandfather can tell me nothing; but he sometimes talks about India and his son Willie; yet he rambles so much I don't understand his meaning.'

'Did you ever ask the gentleman who pays for your living here any questions as to where you came from, dear, or of your parents?'

'I often wish to do so, Ma'am; but when he comes, he always seems in a hurry, and has a harsh, cold manner, which frightens me, so I never asked him any question, or indeed spoke much to him at all. Grandfather knows him, and calls him "John;" but he doesn't like to see him, and, when he is gone, he keeps repeating, "bad, hard, John," and then says, "where's Willie—take me to my son Willie."

So there was no chance of any light breaking upon her dream, which seemed to haunt Ina with a strange reality for many days.

One evening Mrs. Chambré heard from Nancy that Ina was very unwell. She complained of shivering and headache, accompanied with pains in her limbs. Upon this she went down stairs, and for the first time knocked at the door of Mrs. Newsome's small back parlour, which Nancy called 'the den,' and asked if she may go down to the room which Ina and her grandfather occupied. After much hesitation and some lame excuses about the lower regions not being in order for visitors, and the stairs being ricketty, the landlady had to yield; so, calling for a light to Nancy, she showed her lodger down to the basement story, pointing to a door as that belonging to old Mr. Forrester's room. 'But there's nothing the matter with the girl at all, Ma'am,' she said; 'only Nancy is such an old fool about her, she thinks she'll die if her finger aches.'

'Nancy has, indeed, a feeling heart,' replied Mrs. Chambré. 'Thank you, Mrs. Newsome, I shall just see what should be done, if Ina is really ill.' And so saying, she tapped gently at the crazy old door, and upon hearing Ina's soft, little voice say 'come in,' she entered.

The first sight of the interior of the chamber reminded her of one of those old Dutch pictures by Teniers. In a high-backed worn leather chair sat an old man bending over a small fire, with the light reflected upon his face. His white hair and beard were long and silvery, and his features unmistakably aristocratic. He turned and looked at the unexpected visitant as she crossed the room, a pleased and benevolent expression lighting up his countenance; yet it was evident the mind had sunk beneath its horizon, throwing back but a twilight intelligence when some ray of memory flashed across the soul. Upon a low stool at his feet sat his grandchild, her head bent down upon her hands, and with an old shawl of Nancy's thrown over her shoulders. A dim tallow candle flickered in its socket, casting gloomy shadows round the room.

'Well, dear, how do you feel to-night?' said the lady; 'I fear you have caught cold from your broken boots.'

In a started up, surprise and joy appearing in her face at this unexpected visit. 'Better, thank you, Ma'am. Oh! I'm better,' she said, attempting to rise, but nearly falling as she did so.

'I fear you're very weak, love; you should be in bed. I must send you a nice warm drink, and get Nancy to see you are comfortable.'

The old man had fixed his eyes upon Mrs.

Chambré, and now stretching out his hand, he laid it upon her arm, saying—'Where is Willie—is my son Willie coming—have you not seen my noble boy, so kind, so true—like her, like her?' and he pointed to Ina; and then, placing his hand upon her head, he continued, 'God bless her, my good child.' Then, relapsing into silence, he commenced rocking himself gently to and fro, muttering beneath his breath, 'dead and gone; dead and gone!'

'Grandfather often goes on this way,' said Ina, apologetically; 'but at times he is more sensible, only he's fretting to-night, because I'm not well.'

And, indeed, she was not well, for in a couple of days she was in fever, and sent to the hospital one morning by Mrs. Newsome,

who said she could not afford to lose her lodgers for the sake of keeping the child in the house, as she got nothing by her, and she was resolved not to maintain her much longer.

Nancy was at her wit's end about her pet; Lilly cried herself sick; old Mr. Forrester became quite unmanageable, moaning unceasingly, and repeating his usual lamentations, 'dead and gone, dead and gone;' and even Mrs. Newsome herself discovered that she was very badly off without the services of the 'useless burden' she was so dissatisfied with in her house. Mrs. Chambré, fearless of infection, took the first opportunity of visiting the hospital where Ina was sent, and in a few weeks had the joyful news for Lilly that her friend was out of danger,

and would, ere long, be back with them again. Unselfish Lilly saved all her little pocket-money to buy oranges and biscuits, which she sent by her mamma to the invalid, with books and dolls, which she thought may amuse Ina. In fact, she would have given all the cherished treasures she possessed, if her mother would have taken them with her, to her dear friend,

The nurses all spoke in the highest terms of their patient's sweetness all through her illness. Her gentle manner had won those around her, and the uncomplaining way she passed through many a restless night, induced the most hardened attendant there to do the best to alleviate poor Ina's sufferings. And what were her thoughts all this time? Many a sweet hymn did she

take comfort from; for Mrs. Chambré had taught Ina and Lilly all her own favourite hymns as they sat by the fireside in the long winter evenings. How often did she think of the angel spoken of by old Nancy, who watched her by day and by night; but this was when she began to recover, for many days and weeks previously had followed each other, to her mind like troops of dark shadows moving across some desert land, and she shuddered with a kind of horror at the very remembrance of those fearful hours, now, she thanked her merciful Father, passed away.

At length the day arrived when she was to return to her poor home. No princess starting for her palace was ever happier than Ina, when, placed in a comfortable vehicle hired by Mrs. Chambré, and with that benevolent friend beside her, she left the hospital for her old abode. The welcome awaiting her from both Lilly and Nancy was a rapturous one; but she hurried down to her grandfather's bedside, who could scarcely be induced to part her from his embrace the rest of the evening. Even icy Mrs. Newsome thawed upon this occasion; and between fear of Nancy's crossness, and the displeasure of the lodgers, she did not require Ina to return to her old routine of work for several weeks. During Ina's absence, old Nancy had managed to wedge in 'Billy, the boy from the corner' (the cognomen he went by in that neighbourhood), to clean shoes and boots, and go of errands, and he had become quite an institution in the house for

the time being. He was a smart, intelligent boy, with a good, open countenance, and a merry, twinkling eye, that took in everything at once. He always looked you straight in the face when speaking or spoken to, and had arrived at one's meaning before a sentence was half over. He generally stood with one foot forward, ready to start off on a message, with a 'yes'm' or 'yes-sir,' pronounced as if both words were dovetailed into one. He had become quite an ally of Lilly's, as he always had the last news of how Ina went on; for in some mysterious way he managed to run off to the hospital two miles at least—and be back before any one knew he had left the house.

On Sunday afternoons, when Ina got strong again, Mrs. Chambré had her and

Lilly for an hour or so, reading with and catechising them, and she now thought she would try to get Billy to join their little class, which he seemed glad to do. So the three children looked forward to this weekly meeting with pleasure, particularly Ina, who had no clothes to go to church in.

Winter had returned, and one dull afternoon in November, as Mrs. Chambré and Lilly had just come in from a walk, Ina ran up to their bedroom door, and knocking quickly, was admitted. She was all excitement, and said, 'who do you think is come?—the gentleman who pays for us here. Nancy says he is in Mrs. Newsome's little room, so now maybe he'll get me some clothes and a warm coat for grandfather. Shall I ask him about my father and mother, Ma'am?'

'If possible, dear; but don't delay, or you may miss seeing him.'

Down ran the child, breathless with excitement, in which Lilly shared, running to the window to watch for the stranger's departure, as Ina said he never stopped long. In about three or four minutes the halldoor was slapped, and Lilly saw by the fading light a tall man hasten away from the house. Soon after Ina came up, looking very downcast, and told them that 'her relative never stopped to notice her, although he must have seen her in the hall; and that Mrs. Newsome was not pleased, she thought, and said she could only get part of the money she was owed from the gentleman.' So the mystery seemed as far as ever from being cleared up.

But this disappointment preyed a long time on the child, so that Mrs. Chambré had to use her best efforts to soothe and cheer her; nor could there have been any one found more calculated to do this, for it is only by experience we can ever enter into the feelings of others, and with sorrows and trials of many kinds had the widow been familiar since her husband's death.

How often did she tell of the 'bow in the cloud,' speaking to us to look neither backward or forward, but *upward*. Many a time, too, did she draw Ina's attention out of herself to take a near view of the sufferings, privations, efforts, and difficulties of others; giving her a motto which should serve as a balance to her mind, either in joy or sorrow, and which she said she had

herself often repeated in moments of excessive pleasure or grief, 'And this, too, will pass away!'

The soothing words of her benefactress were not lost upon her protégé, but sprang up and bore the fruit of that patience which had taken root in her young heart.

Christmas was now approaching. Ina had no new clothes given her, and would have been very thinly clad, but for the gift of some worn articles from Lilly's little wardrobe.

A sister of Mrs. Chambre's, who resided abroad, just at this time sent her little niece some money as a Christmas box. Almost immediately Lilly had received it, she formed a wish to share it with Ina; and after many important consultations with her mother, it was arranged that a comfortable suit of

clothes should be purchased and laid upon her friend's bed, as a surprise, early on Christmas morning. So they went to choose the things about a week previously. seeing how they could make the money 'stretch,' as Lilly said, to the utmost. After much deliberation they selected a brown merino frock, cloth jacket, neat straw hat, and a pair of strong boots; equipped in which, they hoped, Ina would accompany them to church, and then share their homely dinner. The two girls being much of a size, Ina's frock was made up to fit Lilly, who watched nearly every stitch her mother put in it, and, indeed, gave some help herself, being an expert needlewoman for her age. Nancy was admitted into this grand secret, and was as pleased as if she had been given a

large sum of money for herself. Billy, also, was taken into confidence for he was sent to the bootmaker's to bring home the boots, as they did not wish the man who made them to know who they were intended for, he being employed by other lodgers in the house. Billy was well pleased, also, for he thought Miss Ina was a kind of perfection, and many a private piece of sugar-stick and currant-bun, had he slipped into her hand; and many a pair of boots and half dozen of knives had she found cleaned as if by some good fairy, when she got up in the dark winter mornings, the work of her humble admirer.

And thus matters went on, until an event occurred which, I think, deserves a chapter to itself.



CHAPTER III.

'Hark to that music stealing
From tower and belfry high,
Sweet Christmas bells are pealing
A midnight melody;
We hear their music not alone,
For dear ones whisper in each tone.'

T was the night before Christmas Eve. Ina had lain down to rest, weak and wearied, from one of the hardest day's work she had ever gone through, for Mrs. Newsome had been in a state of enthusiastic cleanliness, preparatory to Christmas. Scrubbing, polishing, dusting, furbishing up tins and coppers in her kitchen, washing down

the house from top to bottom, and giving the spiders no quarter, had been the order of the day. Old Nancy was at her wit's end, and when, towards evening, she discovered that her pet had had nothing to eat since breakfast, she could bear it no longer, but trotting into the mistress's sanctum she had boldly demanded at least a cup of tea and some bread for the worn-out child.

Uncomplainingly had Ina toiled; never murmuring at the rebuffs, or scoldings for not being smarter, which had poured upon her from her hard task-mistress. It was but a continuation of those crosses which she had prayed to bear, and she felt that some sustaining patience had come into her heart, so that not even towards her unkind landlady any bitter feeling rose up in her breast.

But now she slept a deep, calm sleep; no sound disturbed the silent room, for the old man slumbered also; but had spiritual vision been given to them, soft pinions may have been beheld hovering over the lowly pallet of that desolate child, as her guardian angel kept watch around her bed.

At the morning's dawn she rose, for another day's toil awaited her; Mrs. Newsome having informed her the day before that there was much more work in various ways to be done on Christmas Eve. One of the lodgers had been sent a large quantity of holly and ivy, and seeing Lilly look wistfully at it, had given her a beautiful branch, full of scarlet berries. This she now took from a corner, and by the dim daylight, began to place small pieces tastefully round the

room, thinking her grandfather would be pleased on awaking at sight of the bright evergreens. But she did not forget to keep a few choice sprays for Lilly, taking the first spare moment to go up with them to her friend's room, and helping to arrange them in the vases upon the chimney-piece, and around an old mirror, which hung at one end of the apartment.

'Isn't Christmas a lovely time?' said Lilly, as she surveyed the fresh green sprays and red berries of the holly and ivy.

'I suppose so,' replied Ina; 'it must be very nice to get Christmas-boxes, and view the shops, and have holidays, I'm sure; and then to go to church, and see the decorations, and hear of the shepherds, and the angel's songs, and the star that led the wise

men. I often wonder, Miss Lilly, if my angel, that Nancy says takes care of me, was among those who sang the lovely song in the sky that night.'

'I don't know, Ina, but if you ask-Mamma, *she* could tell you, perhaps, for I think she knows everything written in the Bible.'

'Do you know, Miss Lilly, when I was going to bed last night I thought I would like that angel to come and take me with him to heaven, for I felt so weary, and feared I could not work again to-day, my limbs ached so; and then I should only get into trouble with the mistress, and I may think wicked thoughts about her, and offend God.'

'Oh! don't say you want to die; don't, don't,' sobbed Lilly, throwing her arms round

her friend; 'sure I will share all I have in the world with you, and——'

At this moment Mrs. Chambré entered the room for breakfast, and seeing the two children crying—for poor, tired Ina had broken down at Lilly's tears-she cheered the two little girls; promising Ina that she would do her utmost to induce Mrs. Newsome to permit her to spend as much of the next day with herself and Lilly, as she could be spared. But Ina was not sanguine about this happiness, for she knew there would be more cooking than usual for the lodgers, and that she should attend upon old Nancy, and assist her as far as lay in her power. It was hard for Lilly to keep the secret of the new clothes, particularly when she saw Ina's tears, she longed to run and display them,

in order to charm away her friend's sorrows; but she knew her mother would not like them to be spoken of until the right time came, so with difficulty she restrained her tongue, and let Ina depart in ignorance of the Christmas gifts prepared for her.

How much of the real history of our lives passes without any outward development—how much of the hidden mechanism of each heart-beat goes silently on; no sound marking its course, no visual path whereby to trace its wanderings, and yet the machinery moves on, day by day, wound up by the hand that can alone turn that mysterious key which sets it in motion.

Whilst Lilly was making her own little private arrangements for her holiday festival, her mother gazed dreamily out of the window

at the frozen landscape and calmly flowing river, beneath the quays, near which their house lay: all the Christmasses of bygone days seemed concentrated into a panoramic picture. First, her happy childhood's home, when father, mother, brothers, and sisters made a shining circle of joy to surround her. Next, the light came reflected upon the days of her first love, for one who had early been the destined partner of her wedded life. Then came the realization of her desires, when-a newly-married couple-she and her dear husband had journeyed to her parents' dwelling, to pass what they felt to be the happiest Christmas of their lives. But now a dimness fell across this life-picture, for she saw the separation, which had so soon followed, when her husband had to go to sea, and she kept watch with her baby in her arms, for his long-delayed return. The next Christmas had been a joyous one, for he had come home, and she had placed little treasured Lilly in her father's embrace! A heavy cloud seemed now to steal along, whilst a chill feeling at her heart crept over her, for the first days of her widowhood brought with them that utterly lonely Christmas, when no ray of earthly comfort seemed to enter her soul, save when by the cot of her sleeping child she knelt and poured forth the ocean of her grief to her God.

Poor Mrs. Chambré was so absorbed by these remembrances, that she never heard any one entering the room, until Lilly, running over to her with a number of parcels, said—'See, Mother, here are the things you sent Nancy for to the grocer's.'

'Thank you, Nancy,' said Lilly's mamma; 'I fear you found it difficult to walk this cold, frosty day.'

'Why, then, indeed, Ma'am, 'twas no joke to get along the streets, for the boys were making slides in all directions; and I had to go as far as the mart to buy a clane border and a few artifeccials for my bonnet, for I'll go to chapel in the mornin', plase God; though shure 'twill be too dark for any one to see the little penn'orth of greens I'm going to stick in the quilling.'

'Surely, Nancy, you're not going to wear cabbage in your cap?' said Lilly, quickly.

'No, honey-oh! dear, no; but in the

country the girls in my parts thought it too much trouble to give them their long name. so just to save themselves and their tongues the bother, they called the artifeecials greens. But 'tisn't they 're throublin' me now any way; 'tis what I seen below stairs when I came in. I thought I heard sobbin' and a low moanin' in the ould man's room, so I stole to the door, which was ajar, and there, sure enough, was Miss Ina on her knees beside her grandfather's bed, with her head buried in the tattered quilt, and she thryin' to smother her sobs, while the ould gentleman bent over her, stroking down her hair, and callin' her his heart's darlin', and wipin' his poor, dim eyes that were droppin' down tears over her like the rain. 'Twould melt the pavin' stones into a river to be lookin' at them

both. So I goes in, and coaxes the child to tell what happened her. For a while she would say nothin' but-'don't fret, grandfather, I'm not much hurt, I'll not cry any more.' But the ould man roused up and spoke some words, by which I gathered that Miss Ina had been struck and hurt, and I did not think twice to be certain whose hand had been raised agin the helpless orphant. No wonder if a piece of her dinner choked her to-morrow, or if the pot with the pudding turned over and scalded her-but the Lord sees all, glory be to His holy name. About an hour after. Nancy again dodged up the stairs. and cautiously stealing into Mrs. Chambré's apartment, she said in a half whisper-'The murdher's all out now. Herself, suspecting

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that Miss Lilly would thry an' have the child with her to-morrow, began her old tack of cross-questioning the poor thing, while I was out, and findin' yourself, Ma'am, was goin' to ask this favour, she told Miss Ina to put a holiday out of her head; and when she saw the little dhrops stealin' down her cheeks, she sthruck her, saying—'beggars musn't be choosers,' and that across the flure of this room she should never step to-morrow.'

'Small blame to her that she broke down entirely, entirely, at this; for I know that the thought of bein' with yourself and Miss Lilly, Christmas Day, was the warmest spot in her heart all the week.'

Lilly stood crestfallen, and ready to burst into tears; but she went over to Nancy and said, coaxingly—'Couldn't you ask Mrs. Newsome to allow her to come?'

'I'd be afeard, Miss Lilly, for 'twould be vented on Miss Ina the first opportunity herself could reach.'

'What shall we do, Mamma?' sobbed out Lilly, as the preparations and surprises for her friend rose to her mind, and she feared they had been all in vain. 'I would give up my own gifts, and my share of the cake and pudding, to Mrs. Newsome,' she continued, with her usual unselfishness, 'if she would only let Ina spend even the afternoon with me.'

'Why, then, 'tis herself would take and ate it all, and as much more if she got it, the Cannibal,' said Nancy, not knowing the meaning of the word more than that it was an opprobrious term. 'What 'ill be done at all, at all?' she continued. 'Well! shure the blackest clouds come before the cock crows to say the sun is arisin'; but I must go down now, for *she's* prowlin' about like a senthrey, for fear I'd come up to tell you what happened.'

The afternoon had become snowy, so that there was no chance of going out to see the shops, as Mrs. Chambré had purposed doing, in order to try and dispel poor Lilly's grief and disappointment; so they worked and read together by the window, until daylight had quite faded out, and then they sat silently over the fire, each occupied with their own thoughts. A loud, determined knocking was presently heard at the door, and quickly repeated,

as if by one determined to gain speedy admission into the house, and then a man's voice was heard, speaking to Nancy, who had answered the summons; then the visitor left, and Nancy soon after appearing at Mrs. Chambré's door, came in on tip-toe, evidently brimful of some wonderful intelligence. 'What do you think, Ma'am, but we've had a policeman just now at the door, axing if an old gentlemen of the name of Forrester, and a little girl, lodged here. So at first I wasn't going to tell him, for I was afeard something bad was at the bottom of it all, but who starts up from behind his back but Billy, and he says, 'Yes, Sir; all right, Sir,' and he runs away. 'Thank you, Ma'am,' says the peeler, and he cuts off after Billy like a shot. I

wondher what's up now-no harm, I hope, to the child.'

They talked for a while over this strange event; and fearing to provoke farther their landlady's ire, they did not seek an interview that night with Ina.

About ten o'clock, Lilly and her mother retired, intending to be up betimes in the morning to greet the holy festival with thankful hearts, but some noise and confusion awoke them ere long, as if people were moving about hurriedly in the lower part of the house, and voices ascended to their chamber now and then; but they could distinguish no words spoken, and soon their attention was drawn to a burst of joyful peals from the bells of the old parish church across the river, ringing in

the first moments of the day of the great Nativity.

'Oh! Mamma, how lovely; let me sit up to hear the joy-bells,' broke forth Lilly. 'I wish you many happy Christmasses, darling Mother,' she said, kissing Mrs. Chambré warmly. 'I've been longing so much to hear the chimes—aren't they like the angels' song?'

'Yes, indeed, love, I often thought so when I was young; for they draw our hearts to look into the skies, and almost to see our infant Saviour descending again to earth, and coming into our hearts, as God's greatest gift.'

Listening a long time to the grand peals, as they came in gusts along the wind, Lilly dropped off to sleep, to dream, probably, of the morrow.

Never was more truly verified the doubtfulness of what an hour may bring forth. Upon the first gleam of daylight, Mrs. Chambré rose, and soon after Lilly was dressed, they went into their sitting-room to partake of an early breakfast -- both anxious to hear how Ina liked her new clothes, which had been given to Nancy the night before to lay on her bed while she slept. Lilly also had every hope that Mrs. Newsome would be mollified, for no one, she thought, could be cross or unkind on Christmas Day. Ringing for the kettle. they heard a quick, rumbling, tumbling kind of step up the stairs, and in a second in burst Nancy, breathless, scarcely able to speak, and running over to Mrs. Chambré, she laid her hands on that lady's shoulders, saying — 'They're gone, acushla, they're gone: the father come and took them off, just before the blessed bells began to ring, and a noble gintleman he is too;—the stamp of the ould man, that a'most fainted off when he saw his darlin' Willie, as he called him!'

'Who—what?' said Mrs. Chambré. 'Is it of Ina and Mr. Forrester you're speaking, Nancy?'

'Who else would it be, asthore?' replied the old woman. 'Didn't I often tell her the angel was watching over her night and day?—and sure wasn't I right, and wasn't it one of the Christmas angels, too, was appointed for her by the good Lord?—praises be to His holy name,' bowing her head reverently.

Lilly stood by, scarcely taking all this in, but, on further questioning, they got a detailed account from Nancy, which, summed up, was as follows:—

About eleven o'clock the previous night, a carriage stopped at the door, from which descended a tall, handsome man, about forty years of age, followed by the small person of Billy, and the same policeman who had called at the house earlier in the evening. Mrs. Newsome got quite 'skeerd,' Nancy said, and was full of smiles and curtseys when the trio entered the hall. The gentleman demanded to see Mr. Forrester and his granddaughter. Mrs. Newsome's excuses that they were in bed being of no avail, the gentleman's determined manner, coupled with the presence of the policeman, awed

her into acquiescence. Descending rapidly, they reached the old man's room, when a scene ensued which, Nancy said, would have dissolved a heart of iron. For it was indeed the father's long-lost 'Willie,' who was clasped to his heart; and it was the son's long-lost child who slept unconcious of the change that was about to come over her poor, dim life.

Nancy was rich in her description of the alteration that came over 'the mistress' in this scene. 'The decaver of the world, that called the "useless burthen" "her darlin'," she said, 'and helped to dhress her in the new clothes you gave her. I was boilin' all the time, so I was, only I was too bewilthered to spare time on the turn-coat of a woman.'

The lights shone brightly from the windows of a large and handsome hotel in one of the principle streets of C——. The hall was elegantly decorated with emblematic holly and ivy, for it was Christmas evening. A lady, accompanied by a pretty, fair-haired little girl, was ascending the broad staircase, the child looking about her wonderingly, and almost dazzled with the glare of the gaslights, which were flashing everywhere around.

Just then another little girl ran out upon the landing they had nearly reached, and throwing herself into their arms, she kissed them again and again. 'Oh! Mrs. Chambré,' she said, 'it wasn't a dream at all; it was my own mamma I saw. Look here (and she took up her frock saying), my mamma's skirt, my mamma's petticoats

(tucked, you know), my mamma's stockings and pocket-handkerchief. Oh! come and see her—she's waiting for you.'

Opening a door, and ushering them into a splendid drawing-room, Ina led Lilly up to a sweet-looking lady, who advanced to meet them, saying, with tears in her eyes, 'we cannot be strangers, Mrs. Chambré; for a friend such as you have been to my poor, deserted Ina must be already my more than friend also.'

Mrs. Chambré could scarcely speak, so overcome was she at the entire scene before her, which was really as wonderful as the most far-fetched fairy tale ever written. Mr. Forrester had called upon Lilly's mother after church that day, with a pressing invitation to her and her daughter to join the

happy Ina and her parents at dinner. then told how he had not long returned from India, where he held a civil appointment of position and emolument for many years. That nearly seven years previously he had left his only child, Ina, to the care of a brother in the south of England, as the climate of India was unsuited to her. That for some time this brother, whose name was John, wrote most happy accounts of their child to himself and his wife; but then came letters saying that Ina had become very delicate, and soon after her death was announced rather suddenly. The bereaved parents were completely crushed by this intelligence. which was shortly followed by another letter, saving that their father, who resided with his son John, had a stroke of paralysis, and had

become almost childish. Mr. William Forrester allowed his brother a very handsome annuity to maintain the old man in comfort, as John was in rather poor circumstances himself. An entailed estate of considerable value had been left to Ina's father by an uncle, which, if he died childless, would revert to John, who had no family, and was a widower. After the death of their child, Ina's parents cared not to return to England; but at length Mrs. Forrester's health requiring another climate, they arranged to return home, and end their lives in their native land. They wrote to Mr. John Forrester, announcing this, but had no letter from him in return. On reaching England, they found he had died of fever a week before; and on going to his house learnt from an old servant

that he had raved madly for his brother, who, he said, he had wronged; and that he kept calling out, 'send for Ina, send for my father,' for many hours before his death. Nothing could equal the surprise they felt at not finding the old man in the house. But by making diligent inquiries they discovered that, nearly six years previously, he and Ina had been taken to Ireland. So there Mr. and Mrs. Forrester had followed them, with scarcely any clue as to where in that country they had gone, but still with a faint ray of hope their child may yet live. They had now been three months on an unsuccessful search after those long lost ones, and thinking a seaport town a likely place for them to be taken to, they had lately come to C-, and placed their case in the hands

of the detectives, offering a large reward for any information relative to the missing child and old man.

It happened that Billy was very fond of fraternizing with the police, and it also happened that he knew one of those whose beat was about the neighbourhood he lived in very intimately, and used to confide all his little 'experiences' to his friend, telling him frequently about his beau ideal 'Miss Ina.' and how badly Mrs. Newsome treated her: and so, when this man heard of the whereabouts being wanted of an old man and his grandchild, he did not think twice where they were to be found. But now we must return to that joyful Christmas dinner-table round which sat six happy people, for the old man was wheeled over to his son's right

hand, his face beaming with pleasure, as he stroked down his arm, repeating, 'my son Willie, my good son Willie, not dead and gone, not dead and gone.' What a famous dinner it was, too, with such a piece of roast beef and giant turkey, all wonderful in the eyes of the two little girls, who had never seen such a table laid out before; and then the pudding, 'wasn't it a beauty?' said Ina, privately to Lilly, when they retired to the drawing-room. Still they none of them did justice to the good things before them. Their hearts were too full, and when—the cloth being removed—Mrs. Forrester desired the waiter to send up the old woman and little boy who were having their dinner down stairs, and Nancy appeared, followed by Billy, and they were desired to come over

and drink Miss Ina's health, every one in the room burst into tears!

Before they parted that night, Ina begged in a whisper that neither Mrs. Chambré or Lilly would ever breathe one word to her parents of Mrs. Newsome's harsh treatment to her; 'for,' she said, ''tis all over now, and you know we must bear no malice or ill-will in our hearts to any one.'

And so patience had her perfect work in the dear child; nor was Lilly's unselfishness without its reward, for when Mr. and Mrs. Forrester returned to England, they induced Mrs. Chambré not to separate the loving little friends, but to settle near them, as they wished to defray the expenses of Lilly's education, which, they said, was but a small thank-offering for the unrepayable debt they

owed to her who had solaced the life and trained the soul of their beloved Ina for that home above, where, they trusted, they should all dwell together for ever!

The little group had each risen and gathered round Mammy's chair long before the end of her story. Some were weeping openly, others hiding their tears, and Master Jack seemed taken with a violent fit of coughing, which was but a transparent sham to hide his feelings. 'Isn't there any more, Mammy?' asked little Nelly.' 'I wish it was all to begin over again,' added Henry.

'I don't think,' replied Mammy, 'you could keep your eyes open much longer, children. You don't know how late it is; and remember we must be all down an hour earlier tomorrow morning, in order to give time for presenting and admiring the Christmas boxes before we prepare for church. So now, darlings, good night,—God bless you!—and whenever any of you feel impatient or selfish, think of Ina and Lilly, and

Mammy's Christmas Story.





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